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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000280

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [US](#) [EUN](#)
SUBJECT: STATE OF DARFUR: HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

REF: KHARTOUM 00098

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: From February 19-21, CDA Hume visited Nyala, Zalingei, El Geneina, and El Fasher to meet with Sudanese government officials, UN agency heads, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). In North, South, and West Darfur, INGO and UN agencies' operations suffer from the proliferation of rebel movements, loosely-controlled security forces, and bureaucratic impediments. However, the failure of the Sudanese government's military campaign has opened political space to address some of the humanitarian obstacles. The UN has proposed a plan for a separate meeting to precede the Sudan Consortium to address the humanitarian situation in Darfur and to resolve the four issues of most concern to the humanitarian community: 1) assistance in obtaining a collective extension for residency, work, and travel permits until January 31, 2008; 2) a waiver of the numerous fees currently levied on INGO operations; 3) the immediate release of Darfur assets from Sudanese customs; and 4) Re-affirmation of 48-hour visa issuances for Darfur humanitarian workers. End summary.

South Darfur

12. (C) In meetings with CDA Hume and USAID Mission Director in South Darfur on February 19, INGO and UN representatives described the lingering psychological effects of the arrest and subsequent assault on humanitarian workers in Nyala in January (reftel)--perpetrated by local security forces--and the narrowing space for humanitarian operations due to government harassment and the deteriorating security environment. They pointed to a January ambush of an INGO vehicle in Garsila as the first example of a bandit attack designed to kill humanitarian workers rather than hijack their car. Facing rapidly shifting zones of control, aid workers said it had become difficult to obtain sustained security guarantees from rebel groups. In January, a simultaneous rebel attack on eight INGOs in Graidia, which included a sexual assault on a humanitarian worker and the theft of numerous vehicles, led the INGOs to withdraw and left 130,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) without services. In addition, many Government agencies appear to be "operating outside of the system," according to the local head of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA). "Who controls national security, the police?" he said. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) intervened in February, but it is unclear if their work will continue in March.

¶3. (C) By contrast, Acting South Darfur Wali Farah Mustafa called the humanitarian situation "stable" and emphasized the successful, weekly coordination meetings between the INGOs, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the UN, and the Sudanese government. He denied the allegations of sexual assault and physical abuse against INGO workers in Nyala in January. A representative from the Prosecutor General's office noted that the January arrests associated with the incident resulted from the aid workers' "bad habits and practices"--inferring that they had been drinking alcohol--and said that they had told a judge they had not been abused.

¶4. (C) CDA Hume said that President Bush and the USG's principal interest in Sudan was humanitarian and told the Wali that the state was responsible for improving the security situation. He said that two presidential advisors in Khartoum had asked to meet him after his trip and to work through some of the issues affecting INGOs. He advised Mustafa that the humanitarian workers were considering withdrawal and said, "you will be responsible--you and your colleagues--when this happens." He asked that the Government: 1) End the judicial proceedings resulting from the January incident in Nyala and take appropriate disciplinary action against the security and police officials involved, and 2) Improve the working conditions for humanitarian organizations. On February 20, the OCHA head in Nyala informed CDA Hume that the Wali had offered to drop the charges against the INGO employees. (Note: In a subsequent meeting in Khartoum on February 22 with CDA Hume, UNSYG Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs Manuel da Silva said that it would be "adding insult to injury" if the perpetrators of the January assault were not at least removed from their positions and if Sudan did not issue a

KHARTOUM 00000280 002 OF 003

clear statement that the incident was not government policy.
End note)

West Darfur

¶5. (C) In discussions with CDA Hume and USAID Mission Director on February 20, humanitarian workers and UN officials in Zalingei and El Geneina expressed despair similar to their Nyala counterparts. However, they attributed many of the problems, including banditry and a build-up in military force, to the spill-over from the Chad-Sudan conflict. Many programs that had been operating since 2004 have ceased along the border between Beida in the south and Kulbus in the North. The humanitarian workers said that the rebels' aims were to seize logistical items, not to menace the international community, and that seven INGO vehicles had been hijacked and taken across the border in as many weeks. In spite of these difficulties, the workers remained measured in their outlook. "We have to come to a realistic acknowledgment that there may be no immediate solution," said one INGO employee, adding that the North-South war had endured for "20 to 30 years." Another aid worker suggested, "Rather than looking at when to withdraw, let's look at ways to improve the situation...the goal is to deliver aid safely."

¶6. (C) CDA Hume noted that there were two camps in the National Congress Party (NCP) regime: one that did not want foreigners in Darfur and another that recognized humanitarian operations as essential. He said that though he could not have engaged with this second element two months ago, the space now existed to address some restrictions on aid programs because the hard-liners' plan for a military solution to the conflict had failed. The UN and INGO representatives recommended a focus on eliminating the "inordinate amount of energy spent on visas, exit/re-entry permits, and paperwork," in the words of one humanitarian worker. (Note: West Darfur Wali Jaffar Al Hakam, on the cusp

of being replaced as governor by Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)/Free Will leader Abdulgassem Imam, declined to meet with CDA Hume. End note)

North Darfur

¶17. (C) INGO and UN officials in El Fasher focused on the bureaucratic obstacles to humanitarian operations during their meetings with CDA Hume and USAID Mission Director on February 21. They said that many of these obstacles were at the "Khartoum level," such as work permit extensions that were scheduled to expire on February 21. The Sudanese government had blocked six UN human rights monitoring missions in the last six weeks. UN officials considered some local issues--such as checkpoints and delays at the airport caused by the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC)--as violations of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Sudanese government. According to UN representatives, some Sudanese officials were now indicating that the SOFA only applied to UN operations in the South. UN agency heads noted, however, that despite these problems, a recent household survey showed that humanitarian indicators had improved in North Darfur, shifting its ranking among Sudan's 25 states from fifteenth to seventh.

¶18. (C) Meeting with North Darfur Wali Yousef Kibbir, CDA Hume emphasized that the lack of road security and cumbersome bureaucratic processes were hindering humanitarian operations. Kibbir denied many of the INGOs' security concerns and blamed the humanitarian organizations for not notifying the government of vehicle hijackings in a timely fashion. He complained that when the Government attempted to recover stolen vehicles, it was accused of cease-fire violations. CDA Hume asked for a meeting during the week of February 26 to discuss specific humanitarian issues, to which Kibbir agreed.

Khartoum Follow-up

¶19. (C) On February 22, CDA Hume and USAID Mission Director met in Khartoum with INGO representatives from World Vision, Oxfam and CARE. The representatives asked for CDA Hume's intervention in resolving a number of issues affecting their work in Darfur. The INGOs were hesitant to meet directly

KHARTOUM 00000280 003 OF 003

with high-level Sudanese officials outside of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, asserting that large donors such as the U.S. and EU would be more effective. They specifically asked for: 1) assistance in obtaining a collective extension for residency, work, and travel permits until January 31, 2008; 2) a waiver of the numerous fees currently levied on INGO operations; 3) the immediate release of Darfur assets from Sudanese customs; and 4) 48-hour visa issuances for Darfur humanitarian workers.

¶10. (C) CDA Hume raised these concerns in a follow-on meeting with Sudanese presidential advisor Ghazi Salaheddin, also on February 22. Salaheddin, who had recently met with State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs Ahmed Haroun, said that he thought some of the issues had already been resolved. He suggested arranging a small informal meeting between his office, INGO representatives, and two to three ambassadors.

¶11. (C) In a separate meeting on February 22, da Silva said he would encourage such an informal meeting, noting that INGO representatives might be more willing to attend if they participated in their personal capacities but not formally represent their organizations. Da Silva said that many in the National Congress Party (NCP) were worried about a building confrontation with the international community and were interested in finding one area of common ground. He

proposed that the UN and the Sudanese government co-host a parallel meeting on the humanitarian situation in Darfur which would precede the Sudan Consortium in late March. The meeting would allow high level donor engagement with the Government outside the Consortium itself and provide an occasion to announce the resolution of the four issues of most concern to the INGOs.

Comment

¶12. (C) Working with the UN, we will try to arrange a meeting with the Sudanese government and the INGOs by February 28 and to encourage support by donor ambassadors for the UN proposal for a separate meeting on Darfur on March 19. End comment.
HUME